



Ergonomics

Prevention, Posture, and Stretch Reference Guide

Ergonomic injuries develop slowly through force, posture, repetition, and duration. They are the most common type of workplace injury, accounting for more than one-third of all occupational injuries. Small daily habits, proper posture, and regular stretching can prevent most ergonomic injuries before they start.

THE FOUR RISK FACTORS

Force	When muscles must exert more force than they can handle for a task, injury risk increases.
Posture	Extreme or awkward postures stress muscles, tendons, ligaments, and nerves over time.
Repetition	Repeating the same motion creates cumulative wear and fatigue on muscles and tendons.
Duration	Even moderate tasks can cause injury when performed without rest for extended periods.

THE FOUR ERGONOMIC RISK FACTORS

Force

- Force is generated by muscles to lift, lower, push, pull, or hold objects.
- When the force required for a job exceeds what muscles can safely handle, injury risk rises.
- Use mechanical aids, trolleys, or dollies to reduce the force your body must exert.
- Ask for help with loads that exceed safe limits. There is no penalty for requesting assistance.

Posture

- The more extreme, awkward, or unnatural the posture, the greater the risk of injury.
- Avoid bending, twisting, and reaching above shoulder height for extended periods.
- Adjust workstation height to allow a neutral wrist, elbow, and back position.
- Keep work materials close to the body to minimize reach distances.



Repetition

- Jobs requiring repetitive motion increase stress because of cumulative fatigue and wear.
- Rotate tasks throughout the shift to give different muscle groups a break.
- Take micro-breaks of 1-2 minutes during prolonged repetitive tasks.
- Stretch the affected muscles during breaks to restore circulation and reduce tension.

Duration

- The length of time a worker is exposed to any ergonomic hazard matters even for comfortable activities.
- Even a fairly comfortable movement or activity can lead to injury if sustained for too long.
- Schedule regular breaks and alternate between sitting and standing if possible.
- Report early signs of discomfort before they develop into injury.

PREVENTION METHODS

Use the right tool for the task to minimize force requirements.

Stretch before starting your shift and during every break.

Maintain good posture throughout your shift.

Get adequate rest outside of work. Sleep is critical for muscle recovery.

Maintain a proper diet and hydration to support physical performance.

Report any pain, numbness, tingling, or discomfort to your supervisor early.

WHEN TO REPORT SYMPTOMS

Do not wait until you have a formal injury to seek help.

Report early symptoms: pain, stiffness, swelling, numbness, or tingling in any joint or muscle.

Early intervention significantly improves recovery time and outcomes.

Your supervisor can work with the safety team to modify tasks or provide equipment to reduce strain.

Small adjustments today prevent serious injuries tomorrow. Report discomfort before it becomes injury.

ERGONOMICS DAILY HABITS CHECKLIST

Build these habits into every shift.



- ☐ Using the right tool for each task to minimize force
- ☐ Completing a stretch routine before starting and during breaks
- ☐ Maintaining neutral posture throughout the shift
- ☐ Rotating tasks to avoid prolonged repetitive motion on one muscle group
- ☐ Adjusting workstation height to minimize bending and reaching
- ☐ Reporting any early pain, numbness, or discomfort to supervisor
- ☐ Drinking plenty of water and taking scheduled rest breaks
- ☐ Not pushing through pain or discomfort. Report it early.

This document is part of the Meat Institute Worker Safety Series, supporting Reporting Metric A4: Supervisors lead safety huddles and toolbox chats regularly with hourly workers.

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